

"Who Is First?"

Text: Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

In our Scripture this morning we read the ~~author of Hebrews~~
BY THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
narrative of many of the familiar characters of the Old Testament, and their deeds of faith. Men like Abraham, Noah, Moses, and all the rest stand out as very familiar persons in the realm of faith in God. If we read on in this chapter the author cites Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and others as examples that he could have also included. Now if we read the stories of these famous Biblical men, we see very distinctly why they stand out. The answer is all too obvious, and it is faith.

Faith is a very important ingredient in the life of anyone desiring to follow the Lord. Without faith, we cannot do much of anything. We are somewhat like the young lady who was home on Christmas vacation from college, and who became engrossed in a discussion with a minister. She told him quite frankly that she was unable to believe in the story of Jesus. He asked her how she was going to get back to college, and she replied that she was going to fly.

"Well how will you get to the airport," he asked. "I'll take a taxi from downtown," she answered. "How will you arrange to get a ticket for the plane?" he asked. "I'll call ahead and make reservations," she answered.

"Now let me get this straight, " the minister said. "First, you will call the airport to make reservations, then you will get into a cab on the day of departure and drive to the airport, and then you will board the plane." The girl assured ~~him~~ him this was all correct. "Do you know the girl at the ticket counter?" he asked. "No" said the girl. "Do you know the taxi driver?" he asked. "No" said the girl again. "Do you know the man who will fly the plane?" he asked. Again, the girl replied no.

"In other words, you are willing to get in a cab, the driver of which you do not know, and trust him to drive you to the airport. You are going to the ticket counter to pick up a ticket from a reservations clerk, you have trusted

will have saved a ticket for you. You are going to board a plane the pilot of which you do not know and probably will never see, and trust that he will get you safely to your destination. And with all of these unknowns in a very real situation, you can ^{HAVE COMPLETE FAITH} ~~trust in~~, but you say you cannot believe in Jesus Christ, even though he has been written about and spoken of by many, many witnesses." *THIS IS STRANGE INDEED.*

From this ~~very real~~ situation we can gather what faith is all about. But rather than deal with faith alone this morning, I would like to look at another dimension of it. Faith like so many other things has more than one facet, and so we must look at it from each facet if we are to understand it properly. So with this in mind, let us look at faith from the definition that Jesus gives us.

If we look at the 22nd chapter of Matthew we can find it explained ~~very~~ simply there. In this chapter we see that the Pharisees took counsel together to see how they could trap Jesus. So they came to Him asking ~~a hypothetical question about~~ about paying tribute to Caesar. We all know Jesus classic answer, "Render to Caesar the things of Caesar, and to God the things of God."

And a little later the Sadducees come to him and they ask him a hypothetical question about marriage, ~~after~~ the resurrection. First of all the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and secondly, they were merely trying to trick Him. So Jesus knowing their intent, gives them a very wise answer. First he tells them there is no marriage in the resurrection. And secondly he tells them that God, is a God of the living, and not the dead. Now when Jesus tells the Sadducees this, He is really stating that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not dead, but are alive somewhere, and Jesus is showing by this that there is life beyond, thus disproving the theory of these learned men.

And we read that the crowd was astonished at His teaching. Now, that he has put down the Sadducees, the Pharisees are happy and they

want to make points with this wise man, and so they send a lawyer to Him, to ask the question, "Which is the great commandment?" And Jesus answers, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." There is more to this chapter, but what I want to speak to now is merely this great commandment.

It is a good practice to take stock of our lives at periodic intervals. Perhaps some of us do this, and perhaps some of us never give this a second thought. I believe that in order to see in which direction we are headed, it is imperative that from time to time we pause, to look back on what we have done and how we have lived, and then to make preparations to ~~xxx~~ either change what has kept us from the right paths, or to amend our lives accordingly.

If I were to ask the question, "How many of us here can say that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds?" I wonder how many could answer, "Yes, I have." And if you are thinking to yourself right now, that you have done this, ask yourself again. And if you still come up with, "Yes, I have," then ask yourself again. And if your answer is still yes, then ask it again and again until you can truthfully answer "NO.", because there is not a one of us here who can say truthfully Yes to that question and not stand in the way of God's wrath for being a liar.

Now if this sounds pretty strong to you, it should sound that way. None of us, ever loves God with all our hearts with all our souls and with all our minds. Dr. R.A. Torrey a very noted preacher of some years ago once told of a ~~young man coming to him~~ minister coming to him and telling him of a young man who wanted to be a minister.

(Illustration of young man and Dr. Torrey's questions on loving God.)

And so we could ask the same questions this morning. Have any of us put God first in our lives? In our politics, in our businesses, in our pleasures, in our joys, in our sorrows? Has He been number 1?

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST JULY 14, 1974
REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. VELMA COLLINS, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
SHARI MCBRIDE, BRIAN KENNEDY - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 10:00 A.M.
PRELUDE MUSIC: "CHanson MATINALE" KRAMER
"PRELUDE IN E" READ

SILENT PRAYER
*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 380 "O ZION, HASTE"
*ASCRPTION - CHORAL AMEN
*EXHORTATION
*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "IN THY GREAT MERCY HEAR US,
OUR FATHER, AS WE CONFESS OUR MANY SINS AGAINST THEE
AND OUR BRETHREN. FOR ALL ANGER AND SELF-WILL; FOR
ALL USE OF OUR STRENGTH TO BEAT DOWN THOSE WHO ARE
WEAKER; FOR EVERY UNHOLY DESIRE AND IMPURE THOUGHT;
FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY WHICH IS THE ROOT OF EVIL; FOR
HATREDS AND PREJUDICES WHICH INJURE OTHERS AND CORRUPT
OUR OWN SOULS; FOR LITTLE SACRIFICES ON BEHALF OF GREAT
CAUSES; FOR PLACING DEPENDENCE IN OURSELVES RATHER THAN
IN THEE, FORGIVE US, O LORD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR,
AMEN."
*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)
*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN
*PRAISE
*PASTOR: O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.
*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE.
*DOXOLOGY No. 551
SCRIPTURE LESSON: HEBREWS 11: 1-16
HYMN No. 252 "TAKE THOU OUR MINDS, DEAR LORD"
(FRONT OF HYMNAL)
*STATEMENT OF FAITH
*GLORIA PATRI
*CALL TO PRAYER
*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.
*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.
*LAYMAN: LET US PRAY.
PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

OFFERING
OFFERTORY: "MEDITATION" FRYSSINGER
Solo: "BECAUSE HE LIVES" MRS. ROBERT HEATON
SERMON: "WHO IS FIRST?"
PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER
*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 254 "JESUS, I LIVE TO THEE"
*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN
ORGAN POSTLUDE: "MAESTOSO" NOLTE

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY
MR. & MRS. EDWARD WEICHEY IN MEMORY OF "PARENTS".
SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *WALLY FEDER, MONT
MACKINNEY, JAMES MALONEY, STEVE VARGO.
NURSERY IS PROVIDED TODAY BY BARBARA VARGO AND KAREN
KENNEDY.

DEACON AND MRS. ALVIN TAIT WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL AT
THE DOOR TODAY.

THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 228.

HOSPITALIZED: MRS. HELEN CUSTEAD (MAXIMUM CARE),
MRS. JEAN PFLUGH 434.

OUR SINCERE SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF
MRS. ALBERTA (MAE) WEITZEL WHO PASSED AWAY LAST SUNDAY
MRS. MARY YOUNG WILL BE 78 YEARS OF AGE ON JULY 17,
THIS COMING WEDNESDAY - SEND HER A CARD - I KNOW SHE
WOULD APPRECIATE IT. SHE IS NOW A RESIDENT OF
SUNNYVIEW HOME.

ARC CAMPING (OPEN TO ANYONE IN CHURCH) - CAMPING FEE
OF \$4.00 PLUS LICENSE NUMBERS TO BE IN BY AUGUST 4,
TO BRUCE MCBRIDE'S OR HOWARD BOLANG.

CHURCH FAMILY PICNIC - JULY 24 - WEDNESDAY - 6:00
SHELTER CLOSEST SWIMMING POOL - ALAMEDA PARK -
SPONSORED BY THE LAY LIFE AND WORK COMMITTEE.

REV. & MRS. LEE NEUHAUS AND SONS WILL BE IN BUTLER
JULY 31 - WED. - OPEN HOUSE AT GENE STEPHENSON'S
FROM 7-9 P.M.

THE NEW TAPE MINISTRY FOR SHUT-INS HAS BEEN GREATLY
RECEIVED. A GOOD NUMBER HAVE BEEN BOUGHT FOR
MEMORIALS, WHILE OTHERS HAVE BEEN PURCHASED BY
FAMILIES TO BE PLACED IN THE HOMES OF LOVED ONES.
THIS MAKES A GREAT LIVING MEMORIAL WHICH GOES ON
AND ON.

WELCOME VISITORS:
REV. DON VOIS NEXT 2 WEEKS. WALKER OR VAC.

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.